The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team

Cedar City Middle School
1865 North Main
Cedar City, Utah 84720

March 28-29, 2003

Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

CEDAR CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL
1865 North Main
Cedar City, Utah, 84720

March 28-29, 2003

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Steven O. Laing, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

DIVISION OF
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

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Salt Lake City, Utah

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FOREWORD

A major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate inservice growth and school improvement. Consequently, requirements include not only meeting the standards of the Utah State Office of Education, but also completing a school evaluation every six years.

School evaluation is that effort by the local school staff to take a comprehensive look at the school's program, operation, and effect. The school determines how closely its purposes and philosophy coincide with its actual practices and the degree to which its stated objectives are being reached. It is a three-phased program: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, March 28-29, 2003, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to meet the requirements referred to above.

The entire staff of Cedar City Middle School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Conrad Aitken is commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for the generally fine program being provided for Cedar City Middle School students, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more adequately meet the needs of the students of Cedar City Middle School.

Steven O. Laing, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

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DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

CEDAR CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL

Administration

Conrad Aitken..Principal
Corinne Fletcher.. Vice Principal

Counseling

Lynn Nielsen..7th Grade Counselor
Steve Barrick..8th Grade Counselor

Support Staff

Cafeteria Staff
   Shellie Anderson
   Teresa Barney
   Jo Barney
   Mary Jo Beatty
   Marilyn Green
   Carol Langford
   Paula Loveland,
   Manager
   Marsha Rosenberg
   Christina Stevens
   Suzanne Weiss
Secretaries
   Jan Myers

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   Suzanne Ashdown
   Melisa Cornelius
   Carie Edwards

Trudy Hansen
Linda Peacock
Sharon Wasden
Jeanie Washburn
Sandra Webster
Custodians
   Trent Douglas
   Shane Jones
   Teresa Nicholls
   K.C. Olson
   Lance Stubbs, Head
   Custodian
   Wayne Twitchell

Faculty

Lauralyn Anderson
Margaret Ashby
Kevin Barnes
Tim Benson
Trudy Benson
Cindy Bettridge
Robin Birmingham
Annette Black
Monty Black
Danyale Blackmore
Stephanie Blauer

Merrillee Chamberlain
Mardie Dodds
Dianne Grand Bois
Susan Gunn
Colleen Jardine
Micah Jessup
Patty Johnson
Anita Jolley
Dave Jordan
Scott Kamachi
Laurie Kirmeyer

Shelley Kupfer
Brenda Larsen
Susan LeCorchick
Kim Matheson
Steve Matheson
Machelle Maxwell
Cheryl Melchior
June Miller
Konnie Miller
Megan Nelson
Trent Nielson

Faculty (Continued)

Dale Prince	Angela Sanders	Sandy Taylor
Vickie Richeson	Brent Stratton	Jane Twitchell
Jane Roberts	Shane Swensen	Rob Wagner
Jennifer Rowland	Tiffany Swenson	Angie York

CEDAR CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Cedar City Middle School is to provide a progressive, serviceable and inspiring educational experience for all students.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

We Believe …

- …each child must be valued as an individual with unique physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs.
- …students function best in a safe and enriching environment where mutual respect among students and staff is fostered and nurtured.
- …a school-wide commitment to continual improvement is necessary to provide students the best education possible.
- …curriculum and instructional practices must incorporate a variety of approaches to maximize learning opportunities.
- …students need to demonstrate an understanding of essential knowledge and skills and to be actively involved in solving problems and producing quality work.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Spencer Weiler, American Fork Junior High School, Alpine School District, Visiting Team Chairperson

Christine Huley, Granite School District, Visiting Team Co-Chairperson

Lexa Larsen, North Sevier High School, Sevier School District

LuAnne Parker, Washington School District

Jill Porter, North Sevier High School, Sevier School District

Steve Stewart, Orem Junior High School, Alpine School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

CEDAR CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Cedar City Middle School serves roughly 960 seventh and eighth grade students. The students are housed in a relatively new building that was originally built to be a high school. Though the building is stunning, with an abundance of natural light, it presents some limitations that parents, students, teachers, and administrators identified. These limitations include small hallways, a small auditorium, an inadequate cafeteria, and poorly constructed walls. The staff of 48 teachers and two administrators serves students from six communities, some of whom are bused 40 minutes to the school. Cedar City Middle School does incorporate some aspects of middle school philosophy with "Core" teams in the two grades.

a)   *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?*

Cedar City Middle School initiated the process of analyzing relevant data in 1997. Since that time, the school has taken steps to use data to drive its decisions. Currently, each teacher annually updates a profiling report that includes grade distribution, attendance, a student survey, and standardized test score information for that teacher. Once the teacher has compiled all the information for the profile, he or she sits down with the principal to discuss the findings. This format of personal accountability is very impressive and effective as the school works towards improvement.

In addition to the benefits of profiling, each department meets regularly to examine data. This practice of the departments leads to teachers helping teachers and the sharing of ideas. In addition, departments use data from tests to identify concepts that students are not grasping in their classes. Three departments that are to be commended specifically for their actions are the Science and Math Departments and 7th Grade Core team (though this is not an exhaustive list of departments). The efforts of the departments lead to an increase in student learning.

Last year, Cedar City Middle School's ESL population doubled, and the number increased again this year. This sudden increase in ESL students has resulted in struggles and frustrations for the school's staff. However, the teachers and administrators are aware of the problem, and are already developing ways to better meet the needs of all students. For example, the school has created an

orientation video in Spanish for parents with limited or nonexistant English speaking skills.

The teachers at Cedar City Middle School know what the research says about best practices and implement these practices in their classrooms. Current brain research emphasizes the need for inviting classrooms, softer lighting, access to water, and soothing background noise. All of these practices were observed in multiple classrooms, though the practices were not implemented universally in all classrooms.

The teachers at Cedar City Middle School use a wide variety of teaching strategies in their classrooms. In addition to direct instruction, teachers were observed implementing teaching approaches that engaged students in the learning process. The entire school staff is to be complimented for their dedication to helping students learn.

Parents were very quick to compliment the staff at Cedar City Middle School for their dedication and commitment to ensuring learning. Parents felt that the teachers at Cedar City Middle School did their best to teach students, as opposed to teaching material. If a student does not understand a concept, the teacher will intervene before moving on. Intervention examples included personal help and encouragement to attend the after-school tutoring program.

b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

Although the staff at Cedar City Middle School has done an excellent job of collecting data and using it to improve their practices within the classroom, this data has not been disaggregated. For example, test scores are provided, but there is no identification of any possible sub-group of students who performed in the bottom quartile. The same disaggregation of data could be performed with attendance numbers, grade point averages, etc. As the data is better disaggregated, the school will be better able to answer the question of who is learning and who is not learning. On a side note, it appeared that the Counseling Department had disaggregated the data for their comprehensive guidance report.

In addition to disaggregating data, the school needs to analyze the existing data in more detail. What other data could the school include in its profile that might provide greater insight into what is happening well (and not so well) at Cedar City Middle School? Only the school can answer that question, and it is a very important question for the school to ask itself. Once additional data is identified, that data needs to be collected and included in the profile.

The departments put together detailed reports on their roles in the accreditation process; however, they did not answer the eleven essential questions identified in the Utah State Office of Education Accreditation Manual. By taking the time to

answer these eleven questions, each department will better align with the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs), its mission statement, and its belief statements (as well as its motto). Right now it appears there is no connection between what teachers are doing in the classroom and the schoolwide goals (the DRSLs, belief statements, and mission statement).

The leadership at Cedar City Middle School needs to take steps toward including the various stakeholders in the accreditation process. There was no evidence of local businesses having a voice in the improvement process at Cedar City Middle School. The roles of students and parents were minimal as well, though this might be due to apathy on the part of these two stakeholder groups. Regardless, these groups represent voices that are not being heard sufficiently at Cedar City Middle School. The administration recognizes the need for greater parent and student involvement, and seems committed to getting parents and students more involved.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Alignment: Cedar City Middle School should consider taking steps to examine the school's DRSLs, mission statement, belief statements, action plans, and motto, and ensure that they are aligned with one another.

- Disaggregated Data: Cedar City Middle School should look for ways to disaggregate its data in an effort to better identify who is and is not learning at the school.

- Middle School Philosophy: As the faculty at Cedar City Middle School continues down the path of continuous school improvement, a need for a stronger understanding, among the entire faculty, of middle school philosophy and current brain research might be helpful.

- Equal Access: The faculty at Cedar City Middle School should continue to look for ways to provide all students with increased access to education. For example, it appears that special education students are in a more restrictive environment, as opposed to the least restrictive one. Another example could be the English as a second language population. The school is encouraged to examine its current practices and make any necessary changes to better serve all students.

- Professional Development: Teachers are supported in their efforts to participate in inservice and conferences that will enhance their efforts in the classroom. This is a great practice that should continue. One potential area of inquiry would be how the professional development days could be better used to support all teachers at Cedar City Middle School in their efforts to improve student learning. The professional development efforts should have a clear focus that relates directly to the primary learning needs of the students at Cedar City Middle School (to accomplish this, the school should look at its DRSLs).

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

a)   *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

For years, the faculty at Cedar City Middle School has engaged in a serious and professional analysis of pertinent data related to student learning. This data analysis takes place on schoolwide, department, and individual bases, and at each level an effort is made to improve student learning at Cedar City Middle School. The faculty is to be commended for its commitment to continuous self-improvement in an effort to positively influence student learning.

This profiling practice began due to the efforts of the administrative team at Cedar City Middle School. If the administrators did not have an idea of the importance of data in the school improvement process, this practice would never have taken hold at Cedar City Middle School. The administration is to be commended for its vision of how to improve the school and for its ability to generate faculty endorsement of this outstanding practice.

There is not an abundance of evidence indicating that the entire faculty at Cedar City Middle School actively participated in the self-study process. When asked about their role in the self-study process, most teachers referred to their profiling data, but could not remember participating in anything other than focus groups and department meetings in preparing the school's self-study. The Visiting Team's recommendation is for the school to develop a leadership team to oversee the ongoing accreditation process in order to ensure greater collaboration and ownership in future school profiles.

Other members of the school community had very limited roles in the establishment of Cedar City Middle School's report. This is unfortunate, because all members of the school community (i.e., parents and students) outside of the faculty and staff praised the efforts of staff members at the school. The general feeling among parents and students concerning Cedar City Middle School is extremely positive. The school is encouraged to tap into this valuable resource of knowledge and experience to develop an even stronger school profile in the future.

b)   *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

Cedar City Middle School's school profile does an excellent job of identifying the school's many strengths. It becomes obvious to the reader within the first few pages that the school placed a great emphasis on collecting and analyzing data to improve student learning. The profile identified a long history at the school

focused on school improvement. The profile implied that the faculty took great pride in maintaining all the excellent components of Cedar City Middle School.

The accreditation Visiting Team observed evidence of each one of these claims during the two-day visit. The school's climate emphasizes continuous school improvement, both on an individual and schoolwide basis. Departments have developed specific areas in which they need to improve, and certain departments (science and math, for example) have deeply analyzed standardized test score data to identify concepts their students are not grasping. Once these concepts are identified, instruction is adjusted to help students better understand the core concepts of these disciplines. Overall, the Visiting Team was quite impressed with the accuracy of Cedar City Middle School's report. The report did line up with what was observed during the two-day visit.

Cedar City Middle School's self-study report did fail to identify the school's current weaknesses. Though an abundance of data was presented throughout the report, the data was not sufficiently disaggregated. For example, the self-study failed to identify who at Cedar City Middle School is actually learning and who is not. Such data is extremely valuable before a school develops its DRSLs and action plans. The report identified a significant increase in the English as a Second Language population at Cedar City Middle School, but failed to classify this increase as a problem that needed addressing.

The Visiting Team desired to see Cedar City Middle School's self-study report explore its weaknesses in greater detail using the various data sources available. The school is encouraged to begin disaggregating available data immediately in an effort to identify which groups of students are excelling and which are struggling at Cedar City Middle School.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Cedar City Middle School's desired results for student learning are as follows:

1. Learning to Learn Skills: Students will create quality work, evaluating their own work, and strive for excellence while using a variety of learning strategies.
2. Expanding and Integrating Knowledge: Students will expand their understanding using prior and newly obtained knowledge through integration of subject areas.
3. Communication Skills: Students will communicate effectively through written and oral expression. Students will interpret correctly the use of non-verbal language.

4. Thinking and Reasoning Skills: Students will interpret new information, gain knowledge, and solve problems through research and investigation using both creative and critical thinking skills.
5. Interpersonal Skills: Students will learn to encourage and support others while correcting their own behavior as members of a group.
6. Personal and Social Responsibility: Students will develop respect for self, others, property, and diversity.

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

In 1997, Cedar City Middle School went through a process of developing a set of belief statements, a mission statement, and a school motto. Three years later, the administration and faculty revisited these. It was evident to the Visiting Team that initial efforts included all school personnel in the process, but input from other stakeholders was limited. However, subsequent meetings included parents from feeder elementary schools and students from the school. Cedar City Middle School did a good job of using existing data to drive its efforts and evaluate its progress.

b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

The school's mission statement and belief statements address student needs such as individual value, mutual respect, and acquisition of essential knowledge and problem-solving skills. The mission and belief statements describe an effort to provide an experience for the students of Cedar City Middle School that is more than the traditional experience. An effort to increase student success and achievement is indicated in the school's beliefs.

c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

All but one of the belief statements is concerned with how the school staff of Cedar City Middle School should act in behalf of students, whereas the DRSLs are, appropriately, specific to what students need to do. The mission and belief statements do, mostly, align to support the DRSLs, with the exception of Communication Skills, which is not listed in the belief statements. The Visiting Team recommends that DRSLs be limited to three or four to focus the school's efforts to improve student achievement.

Curriculum Development:

a)   *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

The faculty at Cedar City Middle School is to be commended for its efforts to align all instruction with the Utah State Core Curriculum. When asked about their knowledge of the Core, 100% of the responding teachers either possessed a copy of the Core or knew how to access it on the Internet. Certain departments at Cedar City Middle School developed ways to use the information from the end-of-year Core testing to drive their curriculum development and instruction adjustment. These teachers are using this information to identify the essential knowledge and skills that need immediate attention. It quickly became apparent that the teachers at Cedar City Middle School teach their students the Core Curriculum.

The teachers at Cedar City Middle School are also working to ensure effective implementation of the Core Curriculum. The new teachers to the school identified that their mentors discussed with them the importance of knowing and covering the Core Curriculum. The emphasis that the faculty at Cedar City Middle School places on the Core Curriculum has led to a shared vision for student learning; however, there is no evidence that this shared vision is shared by all stakeholders. The faculty at Cedar City Middle School ought to take steps to include the community, parents in particular, in the further efforts to bolster this shared vision for the optimal form of student learning.

One issue that Cedar City Middle School is beginning to work through is the sudden increase in its English as a Second Language population. Some teachers have already begun the process of adjusting their curriculum to address the needs of these students; however these efforts were not universal. Most teachers expressed frustration and concern when asked about the ESL students. It is recommended that Cedar City Middle School work as an entire faculty to identify effective teaching strategies that will address the needs of all diverse learners, especially the ESL students.

b)   *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

The faculty at Cedar City Middle School does an impressive job of working collaboratively to support the development of a stronger curriculum. All departments meet on a regular basis and appear to discuss ways to improve their instruction. Certain departments use the end-of-year Core test data to assess the effectiveness of their instruction and make adjustments where needed. Such a practice ought to be adopted by all departments that have access to Core test data.

Through the profiling efforts, all teachers at Cedar City Middle School appear to work toward developing a more effective curriculum.

Though a very impressive emphasis on teaching the Core Curriculum exists at Cedar City Middle School, the alignment of the Core Curriculum with the school's DRSLs appears to be lacking. Teachers, when asked, were not comfortable explaining how they incorporated the DRSLs into their curricula. Overall, the DRSLs did not appear to drive the efforts of teachers in their classrooms on a regular basis, and consequently did not regularly have an impact on students.

It is recommended that the faculty work to better align the DRSLs with the Core Curriculum. Such efforts will encourage teachers at Cedar City Middle School to assess their own efforts in the classroom and ensure that their efforts not only cover the Core Curriculum, but also address the school's DRSLs. Ultimately, the quality of teaching at Cedar City Middle School will improve, as will the degree of student learning.

Quality Instructional Design:

a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

The teachers at Cedar City Middle School value instructional time, and make efforts to utilize each minute. However, some teachers appear better able to keep their students focused on the discussion than others. As the quality of classroom management at Cedar City Middle School improves, so will the amount of effective instructional time. Though each teacher appeared to have an engaging lesson prepared, some spent more time on classroom management issues than on the curriculum. The entire faculty is encouraged to use some time during the professional development days to address classroom management issues, so that the quality of instruction throughout the school is increased through the decrease of the behavior issues.

Students appreciate the efforts of teachers at Cedar City Middle School when they go beyond the traditional "worksheet" form of instruction. The students specifically identified a number of teachers who make regular efforts to vary the learning experiences in the classroom; however, it appeared that these teachers were in the minority. The students' assessment of the variety of learning experiences did not completely align with the observations of the Visiting Team. Many teachers were observed using problem-based inquiry as they discussed current events (the war in Iraq, for example). Students were engaged in a wide variety of activities throughout the two-day visit, and their enthusiasm for learning seemed high.

b)   *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

The most observed form of instruction during the two-day visit was the lecture format. However, no teacher relied exclusively on direct instruction. Other instructional techniques observed included independent student exploration of a topic, collaborative exploration of a topic, classroom discussion, laboratory activities, use of technology to enhance instruction, peer tutoring, self-paced learning, cooperative learning activities, and hands-on activities. As students were engaged in any one of these instructional strategies, the vast majority appeared to be focused in the discussion or activity. The faculty at Cedar City Middle School is to be complemented for not relying exclusively on direct instruction, but rather developing lessons that engage students in the learning process.

Once again, the faculty at Cedar City Middle School is beginning to work through the issues of meeting the needs of the different learners at the school. Teachers expressed frustration with the placement of ESL students in their classrooms when they possessed no ability to help the students understand the lessons, let alone the curriculum. According to the teachers, the most effective practice is to group ESL students who speak the same native language together so that one or more students could translate for the one who does not understand English. Until a clearer plan is developed related to the ESL students, the teachers at Cedar City Middle School will continue to struggle to meet the needs of all the different learners, regardless of the variety of instructional strategies employed.

c)   *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

Cedar City Middle School has developed and maintained many programs to support student learning. These programs begin with teacher profiling efforts. Each teacher looks annually at the effectiveness of his or her efforts in the classroom. Such a practice will result in continuous improvement of student learning.

Other programs include the eighth grade competency program, after-school tutoring program, honors classes, reading classes, honor society, and other student recognition efforts. It is very apparent that the administration and faculty at Cedar City Middle School are committed to doing all they reasonably can to support and improve student learning at the school.

Quality Assessment Systems:

a)   *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or schoolwide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Assessments are varied and designed to evaluate students with varied learning styles. A strong effort has been made to give assessments that clearly reflect instructional objectives. In the self-study, Cedar City Middle School indicated that an effort was being made to provide students the opportunity to re-learn material when necessary, and to provide alternate assessments when needed. This was verified in the Visiting Team's observations. Expectations for student achievement are well-developed, and the use of data enhances the educational product at Cedar City Middle School.

b)   *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

Cedar City Middle School has developed an exceptional profiling plan, along with an improvement plan for each department. Based on profiling plan indicators, performance assessments are developed which assess student learning and measure student progress as it relates to District Power Standards and the Utah State Core Curriculum.

c)   *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

Many teachers at Cedar City Middle School use rubrics to assess student work. These rubrics allow students to evaluate their own work and help them to understand the basis for evaluation. The Visiting Team also observed portfolios, journals, and anecdotal records, as well as traditional paper-and-pencil tests being used. All assessments appeared to be free of biases. There was some frustration with how to effectively assess Second Language Learners, whose numbers have doubled over the last couple of years. The school seems to be aware of the needs of these students, and is making commendable efforts to resolve the problem.

Leadership for School Improvement:

a)   *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

The leadership of Cedar City Middle School provides a strong emphasis on student learning by the quality and dedication of its faculty and the training and use of the profiling system, which builds in student achievement accountability. There is a strong focus on instructional goals. Teachers meet regularly with the administration to determine the effectiveness of instructional strategies and how the students are performing. Through observation it became clear that the teachers truly care about their students. The Visiting Team recommends that emphasis be place on a form of schoolwide recognition for both staff and students.

b)   *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

A school improvement team composed of department, administrative, parent, and student representation has been using data to analyze and determine the educational needs of all students. The profiling system is used by each teacher to monitor the academic progress of every student. It is suggested that ongoing study and examination of research-based strategies continue.   It is also recommended that further emphasis be placed on involving and expanding the stakeholder base so that more people can become involved in decision-making about the program needs of the students.

c)   *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

Again, the profiling system has been in place for several years and has resulted in an embedded culture of looking at student learning data and determining the educational needs of the student. The teachers consistently use this process and are comfortable with data-driven decision making. The teachers are knowledgeable about the use of testing data to inform their practice and to establish goals and objectives. Teachers meet annually with the administration to reflect upon the progress that students have made and to determine areas of focus for the upcoming school year. The teachers do monitor student progress weekly, if not daily. It is recommended that this process be expanded to look more closely at schoolwide learning trends and deficits. At present, this is occurring; however, with the formation of a school community council, additional focus can be placed on the learning needs of all students, with emphasis on resources that will affect the learning needs of all students.

d)   *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

The leadership of the school provides direction and support by aligning resources and managing the organization to ensure a school climate that is safe and focused on student learning. The school community indicated that their road map is the school improvement plan, which is driven by the mission and beliefs of the school. They also indicate, however, that the DRSLs need to be examined and implemented both schoolwide and in the classroom.

e)   *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

Leadership decisions are aligned with the school goals. Decisions are data-driven and based on achievement data and student needs. Activities and programs reinforce the academic needs as well as the social needs of the students. Decisions, however, need to be expanded to the level of a collaborative community council. The DRSLs will be a focus for the next several years, in terms of implementing them in the classroom and schoolwide.

f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

All teachers and staff members have been supported and empowered by the administration to identify learning gaps and to address these with the students. An expectation of accountability is also embedded in this process. The administration is very supportive of all the programs, educational and extracurricular, that the faculty suggests in order to move students ahead academically. The administration believes in shared decision making, commitment, and shared responsibility for student learning, particularly with the departments. Again, the formation of a school community council will further expand the base for empowerment and shared responsibility for student learning.

Community Building:

a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

Cedar City Middle School demonstrates high levels of community building and supportive working relationships within the school. Department meetings are held on a regular basis, and departments and the entire faculty regularly discuss input regarding professional development and program needs. Several committees work together to focus on the learning needs of all students and to accomplish the school goals. Built into the school community is time for the faculty and parents to come together for social gatherings such as faculty parties, luncheons, and recreational activities. The school community is very supportive of its members. It is recommended that next year a school community council be put into place.

b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

Cedar City Middle School has several collaborative networks which support student learning. The SEOP process provides parents with annual input on their students' educational plan. After-school programs are provided for reading, language arts, and math, and are well attended by students who need extra support

in these areas. In addition, extracurricular programs such as music performances, history and science fairs, and a fine arts competition are strongly supported. Other partners include Southern Utah University, which provides university students with the opportunity to volunteer at Cedar City Middle School. Not only do the university students grow in their expertise in the teaching field, but their support in remedial and reading classes provides individual help for students. Other supportive networks include youth services, business partnerships, and the Governor's youth council. It is recommended that Cedar City Middle School continue to nurture and sustain these productive networks.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

a)   *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

Cedar City Middle School has strong leadership within the administration and faculty. These key people work together to promote and design professional development activities that meet the needs of the staff and address areas of identified need for improvement. A large percentage of the staff is involved in a significant amount of professional development during the year. Department meetings have also been used to provide professional development opportunities. There appears to be a high level of interest in continuous improvement among the Cedar City Middle School staff.

b)   *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

This may be one of the greatest areas of strength at CMS. The faculty appears to be deeply committed to making necessary changes that will lead to increased student achievement. They are collegial and committed to studying research-based practices, which enhance opportunities for their students. They recognize their own limitations and press on in spite of challenges. The administration provides an excellent base of support for the faculty.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (NASCU) STANDARDS I-X

These are not applicable to schools such as Cedar City Middle School that have not sought membership in NASCU.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

a)   *To what extent is the schoolwide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

The critical areas for follow-up include the need to increase the involvement of the community in the self-study process at Cedar City Middle School. In addition, according to parents, students, and the faculty, a need exists to promote a safer school environment (especially during passing time, when all the students are crammed into the halls with the stucco walls). Finally, a critical area for follow-up at Cedar City Middle School centers on the use of disaggregated data to better identify groups of students who are and are not learning.

There are three action plans that address each one of these critical areas. Action plan number one is focused on increased public knowledge of the successes at Cedar City Middle School. In addition, the school ought to work toward involving the community in the decision-making process at Cedar City Middle School. By including parents in the school's self-study and other significant actions (interviewing, data analysis, etc.), the first action plan will be actualized.

The second action plan deals with developing a seamless transition for students within the school. If this action plan includes a greater exploration of middle school philosophy, including alternative bell schedules to reduce the number of students in the halls at one time, then this action plan could promote greater safety throughout the school.

Finally, the third action plan is to identify specific needs of students who are falling below predetermined competency levels. This will happen as the school works to disaggregate all available data so that the students who are falling below the competency levels can first be identified. Once they are identified, the school can work to address their specific needs, and consequently increase learning throughout the school.

Overall, the action plans appear to address the critical needs of the school. The Visiting Team hopes the school will continue to develop its action plans so that the staff can specifically address the needs of the school and help all students learn.

b)   *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, schoolwide and systemwide?*

The Visiting Team is concerned about the commitment at Cedar City Middle School to the action plans. The current action plans do not appear to align with the mission statement, belief statements, and DRSLs. If the action plans do not align with the other vital aspects of the self-study report, it is the belief of the Visiting Team that any improvements at Cedar City Middle School will be the result of chance. If, however, the action plans were to better align with the mission statement, belief statements, and DRSLs, then the entire faculty would have a stronger focus on what each individual must do to increase student learning at Cedar City Middle School.

c)   *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the schoolwide action plan appear to be?*

The follow-up process seems to be very strong. Cedar City Middle School has not only identified who is responsible for specific steps in each action plan, but has also created means for evaluating each step of each action plan.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- Data Collection Process: Cedar City Middle School is far ahead of most schools in the state of Utah in the data collection and analysis process. Teachers at Cedar City Middle School make adjustments to their curricula and classroom actions based on data. That is a sound educational practice that benefits student learning. In addition to the teachers' profiling efforts, the departments meet on a regular basis to examine relevant data.

- United and Committed Faculty: The faculty at Cedar City Middle School is unique in how united it is in its determination to do everything possible to benefit student learning. Teachers call home when problems arise, monitor individual student progress, and even volunteer their own time in an attempt to ensure student learning. The faculty genuinely cares for students and is professional in its conduct, interaction, and dress. There are multiple examples of formal and informal collaboration efforts; teachers are obviously willing to help one another succeed.

- Leadership: The leadership at Cedar City Middle School will continue to be the driving force to oversee the continuous school improvement efforts. Though the leadership efforts begin with Principal Conrad Aitken, they do not end there. It is apparent that the teachers at Cedar City Middle School have a voice in the

decision-making process of the school, and that the faculty and administration drive the efforts of the school.

Recommendations:

- Disaggregated Data Decision Making: The data collected for the school profile needs to be disaggregated to better identify who is and is not learning at Cedar City Middle School. As the data is better disaggregated, student learning will improve, teachers' efforts will become directed at real needs, and a greater focus will be provided for professional development days at the school.

- Desired Results for Student Learning: The Visiting Team encourages Cedar City Middle School to first look at the number of its DRSLs and consider eliminating two or three. By reducing the number of DRSLs, the school will better focus its efforts to improve student learning, and these efforts will have a greater impact. In addition, the DRSLs need to be aligned better with the action plans, mission statement, and belief statements. Once this happens, the DRSLs will become a force for improving student learning in all classrooms at Cedar City Middle School.

- Community Involvement: Cedar City Middle School is strongly encouraged to develop a structured organization that provides the various stakeholders (parents, students, local businesses) with a greater voice in the decision-making process.